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The Fabulous Tales of the Common People, Part 2: Encountering Hadrian's Wall

Abstract

In 2003, the Hadrian's Wall National Trail was opened, providing a 135km (84 mile) public footpath along the length of the Roman frontier from Wallsend to Bowness-on-Solway. Each year, thousands of visitors walk the Trail from end-to-end and many more make day trips to visit specific locations within the wider World Heritage Site. In the second of two related papers (see Witcher 2010), consideration turns from professional and popular visual representations of Hadrian's Wall to the ways in which visitors physically experience the monument and its landscape. The paper explores how embodied and sensory encounters produce and reproduce understandings which are charged with cultural and political meaning. Specifically, the elision of visitors and Roman soldiers through a process of embodied empathy/sympathy is outlined. It is argued that the way in which Western society assumes familiarity with an ancestral Roman Empire actively reduces the interrogative potential of encounters with the monument and limits visitors' ability to reflect on the significance of the Wall. The paper goes on to consider alternative modes of visual and physical engagement, drawing inspiration from virtual communities including geocachers who have used Information Technology such as Global Positioning Systems and Web 2.0 functionality to develop innovative modes of representation and encounter.

Keywords

Hadrian's Wall; World Heritage; landscape; embodiment; empathy/sympathy; visitor experience; reconstructions; geocaching

The Fabulous Tales of the Common People, Part 2: Encountering Hadrian's Wall

Hadrian's Wall has become bigger, better known, better promoted, more loved, more revered than it was when I first walked it more than thirty years ago (Davies *A Walk along the Wall*, 2009)

Introduction

Over the past decade, Hadrian's Wall has enjoyed a revival in public prominence.¹ In 2003, the long-awaited National Trail was established along the monument and three years later, Hadrian's Wall Heritage Limited (HWWL) was created with aims including the development of a Wall 'brand' (Burton 2007; HWMP 2008).² In 2005, the monument's inscription as a World Heritage Site (WHS) was re-designated as part of a new transnational WHS, *Frontiers of the Roman Empire*. A number of high profile events such as *Illuminating Hadrian's Wall* in 2010 and the British Museum blockbuster exhibition *Hadrian: Empire & Conflict* (Oppen 2008) have brought massive international media coverage and thousands of visitors. In this context, the Wall has established itself as a key visitor destination in northern England as well as a focus for regional identity (Barlow 2007).

This paper presents research which draws on a range of disciplinary approaches including archaeology, cultural geography, and tourism and heritage studies in order to explore how Hadrian's Wall is represented and encountered by archaeologists and the public. The first part of this study, Witcher (2010) considered Hadrian's Wall from the perspective of representation with a focus on visitor photography. This second part turns to the ways in which visitors encounter the monument and its landscape with attention to cultural and political positioning. The research is informed by analysis of user-generated online materials (e.g. images from photo-sharing websites) and the results of a photo-questionnaire (see Witcher 2010). This analysis identified five themes:

- a) the distinction between photograph and content, or picture and place
- b) the merging of archaeology and landscape, or Culture and Nature
- c) colonial interpretations, for example, Roman versus Barbarian
- d) function versus meaning, or admiration versus inspiration
- e) and the use of empathy/sympathy.

Witcher (2010) focused on the first two themes in relation to representations of Hadrian's Wall; the current paper turns to the third, fourth and fifth themes with a focus on encounter. This division is purely arbitrary; there is a powerful recursive relationship between representation and encounter. As such, the following section considers the ways in which imagery shapes expectations about encounters with the Wall. The second part of the paper considers how visitors physically interact with the monument and its landscape and how they emotionally relate to their sensory experiences through the use of empathy/sympathy. The broader influence of the Romans' ancestral status for Western society is also considered. It is argued that preconceptions de-sensitize visitors to the sensory richness of Hadrian's Wall and serve to reproduce colonial categories which undervalue its complexity and resonance. In effect, expectations have become more powerful than experience. The final part of the paper therefore outlines some ways to enable visitors to disrupt their preconceptions and to re-sensitize themselves to the monument and its landscape. In particular, it considers the value of virtual communities and Location-based Technologies to enrich these spaces with artefacts, narratives and biographies.

Thousands of people visit ‘Hadrian’s Wall Country’ every year, but not all are motivated by interest in Roman archaeological remains. Indeed, the landscape through which the Wall passes attracts visitors in its own right: botanists, birdwatchers, ramblers and dog-walkers; there are also prehistoric, medieval and industrial monuments to be visited. Many National Trail users are simply enjoying a walk or raising money for charity. It would be informative to study the experiences of all of these groups; some approach the Wall quite literally from a different perspective, for example rock-climbers scaling the crags below the central stretch of the Wall. However, the current research limits itself to those visitors who engage directly, at whatever level, with the Roman Wall and its legacy. In no way should this be taken to suggest that the value of this landscape can and should be restricted to its Roman heritage. Indeed, consideration will be given to how a richer long-term biographical approach might be developed (see also Hingley 2010; Witcher *et al.* 2010).

Visiting & Encountering the Wall

Most people find it difficult to make a logical connexion in their minds between the characters of the straightforward Classical age and those of the romantic age of medieval legend. King Arthur, for example, seems to belong to a far more antique epoch than Julius Caesar... (Graves *Foreword to Count Belisarius*, 1938)

Scholars of tourism have emphasized how visitors’ expectations of destinations are preconditioned by texts, ideas and images including marketing brands and other visitors’ accounts (e.g. Crang 2003). This phenomenon can be understood in the context of the close historical association between archaeology and tourism; for example, Szegedy-Maszak’s (1992: 116) analysis of eighteenth and nineteenth-century tourist encounters of the Colosseum traces “fundamentally mimetic processes, in which visitor’s impressions are modeled on and validated by the experiences of earlier travelers”. For Hadrian’s Wall, there is a wealth of travelogues (e.g. Bibby 2006), guidebooks (e.g. Breeze 2006; Burton 2007), leaflets, official websites and user-generated online content. All of these shape the public discourse of Hadrian’s Wall. In the process, they direct visitors’ physical encounters and, however unintentionally, deny alternatives (see Crang 2006). These texts and images identify the appropriate places to visit and sanction the correct way to experience them, for example, suitable clothing and direction of travel (see Witcher *et al.* 2010: 122; generally, Edensor 2000). However, there can be disparities between these idealized ‘scripts’ and the reality experienced on the ground (for visitor resistance, see Edensor 2001). For example, the iconic view of Sycamore Gap on Hadrian’s Wall positions the photographer perpendicular to the line of the curtain wall, creating a distinctive symmetrical skyline which frames the eponymous tree; the stone wall itself is often barely visible (**Fig 1**; see Witcher 2010 for more on this image). However, walkers following the National Trail east or west along the curtain wall encounter the scene quite differently (**Fig 2**). One bed-and-breakfast proprietor tells of guests who have unknowingly walked past Sycamore Gap and ask to be driven back so that they can experience it properly, that is, from the viewpoint sanctioned by the photograph. Hence, images of the Wall and its landscape are not purely visual but also represent embodied encounters, both in the past (at the moment the image was created) and in the future (anticipating visitors’ movement).³



Figure 1. Sycamore Gap viewed from the south. The stone curtain wall runs along the skyline from left (west) to right (east). (Photo: author)



Figure 2. Sycamore Gap viewed from the National Trail along the stone curtain wall, looking east. (Photo: author)

It is only in the last 20 years that Sycamore Gap has become a must-see destination on Wall visitors' itineraries (see Witcher 2010) but the recursive relationship between representation and encounter which it epitomizes has a longer history. Early antiquarian accounts of the Wall focused primarily on artefacts, especially inscriptions and sculpture, rather than the Wall's structural components or physical setting (e.g. Hepple 2003). In part, this can be explained by a reliance upon information sent by local correspondents; few antiquarians visited in person because of distance and insecurity. During the eighteenth-century, the Enlightenment transformed this approach with attempts to document the Wall more systematically and comprehensively based on first-hand experience (Hingley 2008a; see Lucas 2001: 1-12 for general change of approach). However, it was not until the mid nineteenth-century that visitor numbers expanded to any significant level. The emergence of the Wall as a visitor destination was driven the Rev. John Collingwood Bruce. Following his own visit in 1848, he presented an illustrated lecture to the Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle upon Tyne. Concerned that his "pictorial representation and verbal description" might be considered "too glowing" (Bruce 1886: 135), the following year, he led an expedition in order to allow others to verify his claims for the Wall's grandeur (subsequently recognized as the first Wall Pilgrimage; Birley 1961; Nesbitt & Tolia-Kelly 2009). For Bruce, the Wall had to be encountered to be understood. Not only did this authenticate his visual and verbal representation, it also legitimized his authority to speak and write about the Wall. The title page of his scholarly tome *The Roman Wall* (1853) proclaimed the centrality of such direct experience ("deduced from numerous personal surveys"); Bruce was no library-based antiquarian working from others' accounts. Today, authority derived from first-hand experience remains central to Wall studies. Breeze's (2006) revision of Bruce's popular *Wallet-book of the Roman Wall* (1863; later renamed the *Handbook*) similarly asserts a thorough re-inspection of the monument. Again, the reader is assured that this is no desk-based exercise; his authority follows from first-hand experience. Most archaeologists can be expected to have extensive familiarity with their sites, but perhaps the sheer scale of the Wall means that such an automatic assumption is unwarranted in this particular case and so it must be clearly stated.

Archaeological fieldwork is probably the most intensive form of encounter with any monument or landscape. Like Bruce's Pilgrimage, such work attempts to establish authority about the Wall, on the basis of direct observation. However, the idea of encounter as the basis for objective and authoritative knowledge runs parallel with another established tradition: encountering the Wall as an enchanted or evocative space. For example, the travelogues of visitors such as Hutton (1802) and Bibby (2006) recall the imagined companionship of historical figures such as the emperors Hadrian and Septimius Severus. Survey questionnaires have identified a more generic but no less powerful 'sense of history' as an important component of visitors' experience (e.g. Elliott-White & Cuthill 1998). In each case, visitors are aware of walking in others' footsteps, whether ancient or more recent. For example, Davies (2009: xi) walked the Wall with Hutton's earlier account in hand and "...found it fascinating to look with so-called modern eyes at what he had seen and felt" 170 years before. The Wall and its landscape is haunted by other people and textured with their experiences. It cannot be objectively documented once-and-for-all; it can be endlessly re-presented (see Richards & Clegg 2008: 15). One of the current marketing strategies of HWHL plays on this subjectivity; the Wall has to be experienced first-hand to be truly appreciated and understood (HWMP 2008). Embodied encounters, just like representations of the Wall (Witcher 2010), therefore contain a tension between objective observation and emotional response.

It would be easy to map this tension as objective archaeologists and heritage managers on one hand and subjective tourists and visitors on the other (see Ewin 2000 for this broad distinction). However, this is a simplification and an impediment to understanding both

scholarly and public responses to the Wall and its landscape. The inadequacy of such a formulation is well-demonstrated by an academic review of Breeze's (2006) revision of Bruce's *Handbook*:

Occasionally, Breeze is also given to extraordinarily subjective descriptions such as near MC37 when he states "this is one of the most beautiful and evocative stretches of Hadrian's Wall where, of anywhere along its whole line, it is possible to feel the most empathy with the Roman soldiers maintaining watch and ward over the country to the north" (Rust 2007).

Here Breeze, evoking the style of the *Handbook*'s original nineteenth-century author, dares to go beyond objective description: he not only considers the aesthetic quality of the landscape but also puts himself physically and psychologically in the position of a Roman soldier. Further, on the basis of this embodied reflection, he asserts an interpretation of the Wall's function, i.e. surveillance. For the reviewer, this is clearly beyond the bounds of acceptable academic discourse: too antiquarian in tone and too emotional in its response.⁴ Perhaps unintentionally, this criticism cuts to the heart of contemporary archaeological thought: does embodiment give insight into past lives? Can scholar or visitor better understand Hadrian's Wall simply by 'being' there?

On the ground, the scripts provided by images and texts are reinforced physically and conceptually by footpaths, signs and interpretation panels which choreograph visitors' movements. In particular, as Breeze's experience illustrates, these encounters lead to the elision of contemporary bodies with Roman bodies. For example, in the central sector of the Wall, visitors walk along the monument on the edge of the crags, both protected by the stone curtain wall and empowered by its elevated vantage point. They move through a Roman space, defined by the Wall in opposition to a Barbarian space beyond. More specifically, contemporary bodies are elided with Roman military bodies. This 'neo-Roman' army re-garrisons military structures and uses them to command the landscape visually (**Fig 3**).⁵ Indeed, a walk along the Wall is as much about the opportunity to view from the monument, as it is to view the monument itself. Wylie's (2002) ascent of Glastonbury Tor identifies a similar tension between viewing a monument and viewing from it. In the case of Hadrian's Wall, the linear form of the monument establishes a colonial duality: insider versus outsider. Being on, and viewing out from, the Wall elides visitors with Roman soldiers and sets them in opposition to the Barbarian beyond.

The Wall scholar Sir Ian Richmond (1936: 2) suggested that "every visitor creates for himself a dream world of the past, whatever his sympathies, whether in the guise of a Pictish robber crossing the hated barrier, or a Roman soldier defending the boundary of his province". In practice, the monument and the choreography of visitor movement around it creates identification with the Roman military. This situation is clearly illustrated by user-generated photographs of visitors viewing out from the Wall across the landscape and is corroborated by comments about vistas and panoramas. Similarly, photographs of reconstructed sections of the stone curtain wall repeatedly show visitors on top of these structures (as Roman soldiers) rather than encountering them in other ways, for example, from ground level. It would be wrong to ignore the inherent humour in these images, but their consistency is striking. The significance of these physical encounters with Hadrian's Wall is clearly revealed when compared to the Berlin Wall. In November 1989, being on the Berlin Wall was an unambiguously political act of popular appropriation which emasculated the barrier by denying its function. The chronological remoteness of the Roman period may blunt the resonance of being on Hadrian's Wall, but the encounter is no less politically significant; in this case, however, visitors do not break the Wall down but rather re-garrison the frontier and restore it to its former perceived function.⁶



Figure 3. Pilgrims on the Thirteenth Decennial Hadrian's Wall Pilgrimage at Steel Rigg. (Photo: author)

The transfiguration of contemporary bodies into Roman bodies dissolves any distinction between scholarly and popular encounters. Their aims and methods are the same: understanding the past through sensory experience. In using embodied encounters, archaeologists and visitors are empathizing, that is, seeking to understand others through shared experiences. For example, on Hadrian's Wall, modern visitors frequently express empathy with Roman soldiers in relation to the northern climate.⁷ As with many visitor habits on Hadrian's Wall, this practice is part of a long-established tradition: 150 years ago, Bruce (1853: 90) used empathy to suggest that the garrison of Lingones, recruited from the Burgundy region, would have found the "sunny slope" of their fort at Wallsend (*Segedunum*) "peculiarly acceptable".

A key explanation for the ease with which visitors and archaeologists use sensory experience to empathize is Western society's familiarity with the Roman past. Both scholars and the wider public relate quite differently to the cultural legacy of the Roman period in comparison to the prehistoric and medieval eras. Generally speaking, Western society assumes greater familiarity with Roman civilization because 'the Romans were like us' (Wilkinson 2001). Scholars have demonstrated the cultural and political construction of this belief (see Hingley 2000); none the less, it still influences the way in which archaeologists themselves interact with and write about the Roman past. For example, whilst prehistorians have used fictionalized empathetic narratives as critiques of the self-proclaimed objectivity of academic discourse (e.g. Edmonds 1999), attempts at similar techniques by scholars of the Roman period risk misperception. This is because historical novels (e.g. Graves 1934; Sutcliffe 1954) have already created and exploited a sense of empathy with Roman society which has closed the distance between past and present. Broadly speaking, scholars and public alike empathize too readily with the Romans (see Butterworth & Laurence 2005 and Hopkins 1999 for interesting examples of fictionalized narratives).

A decade ago, Tarlow (2000: 723) noted the limited discussion of empathy in the archaeological literature (but see Hodder & Hutson 2003: 161; Shanks & Tilley 1992: 15-17); this situation has not substantially changed over the subsequent ten years. The degree to which archaeological interpretation must rely upon some form of empathy requires more attention. There is a similar dearth of literature on empathy in relation to contemporary visitors at heritage sites (though see Prentice & Andersen 2007 on 'felt history'). Arguably, an important aspect of this epistemological issue is the distinction between empathy and sympathy. The former is a way of knowing what it is like for others and of understanding their situation; the latter is a way of relating, of sharing feelings, or ultimately of *being* that person (Butler & Rowlands 2005: 101-2). By these definitions, archaeologists and visitors are not empathizing with Roman soldiers but rather are sympathizing with them. Contemporary visitors not only share knowledge about what it is like to be on the Wall but actively relate to these experiences emotionally, sharing in their cultural and psychological significance and, ultimately, being Roman.

Butler & Rowlands (2005) argue that sympathy is altruistic, whilst empathy may be motivated by good intentions but can also be narcissistic. However, it is arguable that sympathy is not always altruistic if a person's identification with one group relies on partial or misplaced comprehension, or if such identification occludes recognition of other groups. In the case of Hadrian's Wall, if visitors sympathize strongly with Roman soldiers, there is a danger that everyone else is ignored or grouped as an undifferentiated Other. This romano-centricity recreates colonial categories such as Roman versus Barbarian and military versus civilian. Sympathy may therefore be well-meaning but the result may be one-sided; taking someone else's part may mean that the view is partial.⁸

One explanation for the limited discussion of empathy/sympathy in recent archaeological literature is that it has been subsumed within wider phenomenological studies. Scholars such as Tilley (1994; 2004; 2008) have argued that the sensory experiences of contemporary archaeologists can be used as proxies for the experiences of past people. Hence, an archaeologist's embodied encounter with a prehistoric monument can be accepted, to some extent, as equivalent to similar encounters in the past.⁹ Such archaeological applications of phenomenology have come under critique. For example, it is argued that the senses are culturally, not biologically, determined; in particular, contemporary prioritization of sight is predicated on a fundamental reconfiguration of the senses during the Renaissance (Brück 2005). The senses are also bound to a web of culturally-determined emotions, historically-situated knowledge and socio-political relations which give meaning to specific sights, sounds and smells. The supposition that contemporary bodies can serve as direct substitutes for past bodies therefore entails universalist assumptions (see Crouch & Desforges 2003 for similar critique of tourist studies). In effect, there is a risk of colonizing the past with modern sensory perceptions and emotional registers. However, just as senses and emotions are not purely biological, nor are they entirely cultural either (Tarlow 2000). In response to the paralyzing effects of this biology versus culture debate, Insoll (2007) argues for a 'critical realist' approach in which the emotions and senses are both biological and cultural. As humans we share biological traits but these are understood socially and culturally.

It should therefore be concluded that encounters with archaeological monuments, whether by professional archaeologists or by tourists, inevitably involve relating to other people. However, in order that modern sensibilities are not imposed on the past, it is important that universalizing assumptions are avoided. In other words, that empathy does not slide into sympathy. An important part of this process must be to expose and explore Western society's familiarity with the Roman past. There is need for greater self-reflection about the cultural and political contexts within which a Roman villa appears more directly comprehensible and ancestral than a Neolithic long barrow or an Iron Age hillfort. The key

question is therefore what do archaeologists and public alike derive from visiting a monument such as the Wall? Simply being there does not provide direct access to the past; it does not make interpretations automatically better. Rather, embodied sensory encounters should evoke and provide the stimulus for the narration of more complex understandings of the past.

Whose Wall is it Anyway?

It has also seemed that the wording of 1863, and even some of the sentiments of that time, had by 1963 become so dated and even so distasteful that some revision of the diction was required (Richmond *Preface* to Bruce's *Handbook to the Roman Wall*, 1966 Twelfth edition)

In her cultural history of the study of Hadrian's Wall, Ewin (2000) documents the rise of professional archaeology at the expense of altruistic amateurs and popular interest. However simplistic this characterization may be, it is clear that a decade later, professional archaeologists are just one of a growing group of stakeholders (see Norman 2008). Unsurprisingly, this diversification of ownership has been accompanied by a proliferation of popular media and user-generated online materials. Yet the resources reviewed for this study (see Witcher 2010) suggest that the public discourse of Hadrian's Wall remains relatively narrow and traditional in focus: a military frontier, Roman versus Barbarian, a wild and remote landscape. There is comparatively little material which captures the potential richness of the monument in terms of contemporary social concerns. Similarly, little of the academic debate of the last two decades appears to have impacted. Hence, despite the multiplication of stakeholders, there has not been a clear diversification of perceptions. If anything, the New Media has fossilized the discourse: as existing knowledge is recycled it acquires authority through repetition and ease of accessibility (see Jansson 2007 and Jamal & Kim 2005 for heritage perspectives on discourses of power). Put simply, more people are talking, but they are saying the same things. Arguably, there has been an inversion of the relationship between professional and public as outlined by Ewin (2000) whereby an explosion in the quantity of user-generated material, popular books, novels and newspaper articles disguises a restatement of the hegemonic discourse. To be clear: it is invidious to blame the public for a lack of imagination or for not keeping pace with academic debate. Rather, this phenomenon is a comment on the potentially stifling, as well as liberating, effects of the New Media in reinforcing the *status quo*.¹⁰

The hegemonic discourse of Hadrian's Wall has several strands, two of which are discussed here: the function of the Wall and the perception of the 'Romans as us'. Firstly, whereas prehistoric monuments such as Stonehenge are popularly perceived as mysterious and romantic, the Wall is understood as explicable in purely functional terms: defensive, military domination, delineation, the expression of power – or more mundanely, as a building project to keep soldiers busy.¹¹ Rather than inspiration, a more common response to the Wall is admiration of its engineering and organizational achievement. This pervasive myth of functionality strips the Wall of its potential interpretive richness. The apparently inevitable and innocuous question of the Wall's function directs attention away from the articulation of other interpretations. In fact, the emphasis on functionality closely echoes the dominant concern of academic archaeology through to the 1980s and, to some extent, even today. By the mid twentieth-century, a belief had emerged within some parts of academia that Hadrian's Wall was finished business; the form of the Wall had been documented and its function explained. Sir Mortimer Wheeler allegedly claimed that all the questions about the Wall had been resolved and it only remained "to dot the i's and cross the t's".¹² Contesting the stifling belief that form and function are the only important questions to be addressed has been an ongoing challenge within the academic community (e.g. Hingley 2008b; James 2002) and it is therefore hardly surprising that functionality should continue to dominate wider public discourse.

Secondly, both academic and popular responses to the Wall draw heavily on the concept of the 'Romans as us'. The archaeological and textual evidence for roads, rectilinear houses, central-heating, literacy and government are all taken to affirm a shared genealogy (Hingley 2000; Wilkinson 2001). As with functionality, this starting premise negates the need for further explanation; there is no need to seek ways of understanding others because the Romans are held up as a mirror. Through schooling and popular culture, Western society had grown over-familiar with the Romans and hence overlooks the many points of difference: language, family relations, political organization, slavery, and animal sacrifice. In effect, the otherness of the Romans is culturally neutralized and one effect is to depoliticize the Wall. Frontiers are always contentious, yet the political significance of the Wall is at best occluded and at worst deliberately obscured. By assuming similarity between the Roman past and the present, a problematical and embarrassing frontier is internalized; engineering achievement is prioritized over colonial violence (see Creighton 2007 on the problems of walls as heritage). The assumption that the Roman past reflects the present does a disservice to the people of the past whose lives are appropriated; it also reduces the potential cultural and social resonance of the Wall to contemporary society.

But what if visitors' encounters and representations do reproduce and perpetuate what many professional archaeologists consider to be outdated or at least a biased set of ideas about Hadrian's Wall? Do the 'fabulous tales of the common people' (Camden 1607; see Witcher 2010) demand equality? To what degree should archaeologists question or correct inaccuracies, politically undesirable interpretations or even deliberate manipulations of the evidence? The contributors to a recent volume on multiple narratives strongly welcome archaeology's new plurality but also broadly concur that there can be wrong interpretations and that professional archaeologists do have responsibilities to question them (Habu *et al.* 2008; esp. Silberman 2008). This professional responsibility is reiterated by Tarlow (2000: 729) in relation to empathy: "we can and should challenge emotional anachronism in both scholarly and popular accounts of the past". Indeed, if archaeologists do not interpret the past and influence public understanding, then professional archaeology is reduced to the mechanical application of method. The (at best) didactic ambitions and (at worst) exclusionary practices of past generations of scholars demonstrate the need for care. However, questioning bad interpretations is not synonymous with sanctioning a definitive past. The aim should not be to impose the correct interpretation but rather to enable people to engage with multiple possibilities. Two changes which would facilitate more profound engagement with the complexity and richness of Hadrian's Wall are de-familiarizing the Romans and contextualizing questions about the Wall's function with greater emphasis on meaning.

Visitor as Archaeologist?

There is an affliction known as Wall Fever which besets many visitors to these old fortifications and results from enthusiasm and imagination, and a passionate urge to discover more. This is a healthy and rewarding pursuit. (Wainwright *Pennine Way Companion*, 2004)

Tourist studies have noted that many visitors to destinations express no surprise or astonishment because they have already experienced them virtually before they travelled (Crang 2006). Visitors' preconceptions are fulfilled; the hermeneutic circle is closed. Focussing specifically on heritage sites, Copeland (2002) argues that visitor experience should be more disruptive, troubling and inspiring; it should encourage pause for thought rather than simply reaffirm preconceptions. An example of this problem is provided by consultation exercises on Hadrian's Wall which seek the public's ideas about future development of tourist provision. Many respondents say that they do not want anything different – they want more of the same (e.g. Kinghorn & Willis 2008).¹³ In particular, visitors request more excavation and more military re-enactment events. It is important to

recognize that these responses are conditioned by prior expectations. Archaeology is popularly understood as synonymous with excavation; likewise, re-enactment is an expected activity at heritage sites. Demands for more are shaped in dialogue with powerful brands and wider social expectations about archaeology and heritage sites (Holtorf 2007). Without doubt, both excavation and re-enactment are important modes of public engagement, but they are not the only possibilities. In terms of disrupting such expectations and challenging preconceptions, more excavation and re-enactment alone are insufficient. Re-enactment provides an interactive visitor experience which may 'bring a site to life', but it also has the effect of closing the conceptual space between visitor and Roman. There is a danger that re-enactment confirms expectations of the 'Romans as us'. Visitors can communicate with re-enactors directly; they can feel the weight of weapons and admire physical strength, or watch cavalry practice and marvel at horsemanship. However, in the process, the less palatable aspects of Roman military life recede into the background. The problem is not re-enactment *per se*, but rather the belief that infinitely more re-enactment is infinitely better.

In recent years, a series of events have raised the profile of Hadrian's Wall. Some have employed tried-and-tested techniques such as re-enactment (e.g. *The Living Frontier*, 2009). Others have developed innovative approaches such as *Singing in the Bath* in 2007 and *Illuminating Hadrian's Wall* in 2010; these have developed more creative engagements with the monument, opening space for imagination and inspiration. Such staged events have achieved national and international publicity as well as local popularity, but their cost means that they can only form a limited strand of overall public engagement.

Such events aside, how can visitors be encouraged to question preconceptions and to look critically at the realities of the monument and its landscape? The approach suggested here focuses on 'enabling'. By encouraging visitors to use their sensory experiences rather than preconceptions to formulate questions, encounters can become transformative. A vital part of such an approach is to distance the Romans so that differences as well as similarities can be perceived. Visitors must be allowed to appreciate the full biography of the monument. The Hadrian's Wall 'brand' has concentrated public perception on a few short centuries of Roman occupation. But the Wall is not just a Roman frontier; it also has 1600 years of post-Roman history (see Hingley *et al.* forthcoming). It is a landscape through which to learn about Conversion, Border Reivers and Victorian antiquarians as well.

An important way of enabling visitors to get more out of the monument must be to dispel the popular belief that archaeology equals excavation. The expectation that there will be ongoing large-scale excavation on Hadrian's Wall is pervasive and hence the absence of such fieldwork for more than 20 years is noticed by visitors (Kinghorn & Willis 2008).¹⁴ Excavation is critical for the generation of new data but it is also expensive and must be problem-driven in order to preserve a finite resource; the number of active excavations will therefore always be limited compared to the number of visitors and the size of the monument as a whole. But liberated from the belief that excavation is the only means through which to discover and understand the past, visitors can become landscape archaeologists. Just as Web 2.0 has transformed consumers into producers of knowledge, it is possible to recast the visitor as investigator, actively asking questions and seeking answers through sensory embodied encounter with the monument and its landscape.

Walking becomes a medium of discovery, raising questions and creating connections. For example, as visitors move around monument and landscape, they may become unusually aware of their bodily requirements for food, rest and shelter; the scarcity of toilets and the stamina needed to climb hills may underscore personal limitations and abilities of others. Whilst most other WHSs smooth away these inconvenient needs through the provision of

facilities, the inability to do this at a monument of the size and complexity of Hadrian's Wall means that such requirements are accentuated. In some respects, these visitors might be understood as 'dwelling'. They are not simply viewing but engaging with the landscape in pursuit of their basic needs (on 'taskscape', Ingold 2000; see also Crang 2006; Crouch & Desforges 2003).

The value of such experiences is easily lost through sympathy. For example, the cold, rain and wind encountered on a visit to Hadrian's Wall often leads to sympathy with sun-loving Italians posted far from home on the northern frontier (see Auden 1966 *Roman Wall Blues*).¹⁵ However, this sympathetic response (I'm a cold Roman soldier) is closed; there is nowhere else to go. A looser empathetic response is open; it allows for questions. As we brave the weather, we might ask how Romans soldiers kept warm and dry. Did they really wear tunics and sandals? Or did they wear trousers and shoes? Instead of admiring the ingenuity of Roman 'central heating' (i.e. hypocausts), we might note that such technology was generally restricted to bath-houses; domestic spaces were probably heated by braziers. More self-aware of how central-heating has changed our own perceptions, we might think about the inefficiency and risk of soldiers lighting dozens of fires in the densely-packed barrack blocks of a Roman fort. Similarly, struggling to make ourselves heard over the prevailing wind, we might wonder how troops were mustered and orders communicated around a large, windswept fort. Searching for lunch, we might wonder how sufficient food was grown and supplied to the hundreds of soldiers and their families stationed along the Wall.

In each of these cases, it is empathy rather than sympathy which allows these questions to be asked. An excellent example of this subtle difference concerns the well-preserved Roman latrine at Housesteads fort. The National Trust (2009) prominently advertises this communal toilet as an example of sophisticated Roman plumbing and hygiene ("one of the earliest-known flushing toilets in Britain"). Visitors are presented with a multilingual interpretive panel including a reconstruction painting (**Fig 4**). The latrine is the subject of several such imaginative representations; the best-known is by Ronald Embleton (Graham 1988: 18; **Fig 5**). The latrine is highly popular with visitors. Such Roman toilets grab our attention because, as Hobson (2009: ix) has recently noted, "everybody has a degree of personal knowledge and experience"; we can all imagine their use. But beyond sympathetic admiration for the latrine's sophistication (implicit recognition of its ancestral status to our high standards of sanitation), the structure evokes many questions: privacy (there are no partitions), gender (did women use these facilities too?) And did Romans really use sponges instead of toilet paper? Such questions are regularly voiced by visitors on the latrine's threshold and demonstrate that this building has more demonstrable power to engage visitors than any other at the extensive Housesteads site. Arguably the explanation for the depth of engagement is that visitors have suspended sympathy and reverted to empathy. The elision of visitor and Roman is disrupted sufficiently to allow space for questions to be posed; for a moment, visitors are modern individuals again, feeling slightly confused in someone else's world. As such, the Housesteads latrine holds lessons for how empathy rather than sympathy can evoke questions.



Figure 4. Latrine at Housesteads fort with interpretation panel. (Photo: author)

Figure 5 unavailable for copyright reasons.

Figure 5. Reconstruction of latrine at Housesteads fort by Ronald Embleton (from Graham 1988: 18)

Provoking Questions

A book like this has the singular privilege of not lying still all its days indoors, but travelling with its owner and sharing his fortunes of wind and weather (Collingwood *Preface to Bruce's Handbook to the Roman Wall*, 1933 Ninth edition)

This final section considers two ways in which visitors might be liberated from the straightjacket of functionality, sympathy and colonialism, in order to engage with the archaeological landscape of Hadrian's Wall more deeply. These are reconstructions and

Information Technology. The building of life-size reconstructions of Hadrian's Wall has been popular with visitors and considered an effective means of communication (on simulacra, Hobley 1982; on reconstructions as representations, Witcher 2010; on controversy, Birley 2009: 36-7; Blockley 1999). One reason for their success is that they appear to be definitive and authentic visions of the past. Unlike the ruined archaeological remains, they are tangible and complete. In particular, the authenticity of these reconstructions is guaranteed by the solidity of the stone and concrete from which they are built. This monumentality employs the exact same psychology as that behind the original Roman structures; scale and solidity are used to communicate an unambiguous message of authority (on neo-Roman monumentality, see Hingley *et al.* forthcoming).

This perceived completeness is problematical for two reasons. Firstly, it is impossible for any reconstruction to be truly complete by its very nature. The reconstructed bath-house at Wallsend (**FIG 6**) provides an evocative experience of built space, but there is little quotidian clutter: there are few wooden buckets or woollen towels, glass flasks for oil or sandals to protect feet on the heated floors. The rich detail witnessed by Roman artefacts in museum displays is absent. The dioramas inside the reconstructed barracks and commanding officer's house at South Shields (*Arbeia*) incorporate much more portable material culture. However, the addition of ever more visual detail neglects the other senses: the bath-house has no extremes of temperature between the hot room (*caldarium*) and cold room (*frigidarium*), nor the sounds of splashing water or the smell of sweat and perfumed oils (for consideration of lived experience and archaeological interpretation, see Charest 2009). Yet, even if such infinite detail and full sensory immersion could be supplied, the bath-house would still be incomplete because ultimately visitors can never experience it as a Roman would. Much of our sensory experience of the contemporary world is minutely managed: for example, electric lights, double-glazing and air-conditioning diminish our perception of light, noise, temperature and weather. Our everyday sensory experience of the world is fundamentally different to that of past peoples. The smell of a cess-pit may not change through time, but it will effect quite different responses in past and contemporary societies because the cultural contexts are radically different. Hence, creating and giving greater awareness to authentic sounds, smells and sensations can never provide direct insight into past lives. A fully authentic reconstruction is illusory.

Secondly, the perceived completeness of reconstructions is problematical because archaeologists do not agree on every aspect of the Wall's original form. The definitive structures encountered by visitors therefore conceal much academic debate. Taking the stone curtain wall as an example, there has been no attempt to build alternative reconstructions side-by-side; to find competing versions it is necessary to visit several different sites, many kilometres apart.¹⁶ In effect, visitors are dissuaded from engaging more deeply because the definitive and monumental forms encountered at any one time defy contestation. Two or more competing versions on the same site would have more potential to stimulate visitor curiosity. Less authority is sometimes more engaging.



Figure 6. Reconstructed bath-house at Wallsend, with remains of barrack blocks in foreground. The structure is positioned immediately outside the (invisible) boundary of the World Heritage Site. (Photo: author)

A specific issue in the context of Hadrian's Wall is that the structures selected for reconstruction have prioritized particular components of the frontier – i.e. the stone curtain wall and individual fort buildings. This is partly a requirement for low-maintenance, weather-proof heritage attractions, but there is a danger that these select structures simply fulfil prior expectations about the monument's form (i.e. as a stone wall). This makes it harder to communicate a broader concept of Hadrian's Wall and to encourage visitors to experience other parts of the WHS (see Witcher 2010). Notably, there has been no attempt to reconstruct the massive linear earthwork (the vallum) to the rear of the stone curtain wall. There are good practical explanations – it would require huge amounts of land and hence great cost; but more importantly, it would lack 'imageability' (Lynch 1960; see Witcher 2010). None the less, such a reconstruction would enable visitors to encounter the formidable scale of this impressive earthwork its own right.¹⁷

In sum, reconstructions have a tendency to prioritize particular aspects of the past, inevitably providing an incomplete impression, but unavoidably representing that experience as definitive. As with re-enactment, this is not an argument against the use of reconstructions; rather it is a call to make reconstructions less perfect through awkward juxtapositions, alternative versions and even flaws. For example, the reconstructed stone curtain wall at Wallsend presents an impression of skilled engineering and precise construction. However, this contrasts sharply with the nearby remains of the original wall. Here, excavations revealed that the curtain wall had collapsed and been repaired repeatedly during the Roman period (Bidwell 2009). When these remains are consolidated for public display, the juxtaposition of an imperfect Roman wall and a perfect reconstruction has the potential to stimulate interesting questions about Roman military planning and construction. Similarly, on the rear face of the reconstructed wall is a modern stone inscription which imitates the Roman 'epigraphic habit' of commemorating building

works (**FIG 7**). Since completion in 1997, some of the surface has been eroded away and the text left partially illegible. Powerfully but unintentionally, the inscription provides a reminder that for every well-preserved Roman inscription in a museum, many more have vanished (for consideration of what else is missing, Allason-Jones 2008).



Figure 7. Modern inscription commemorating the reconstruction of a section of stone curtain wall at Wallsend. (Photo: author)

Reconstructions are a popular and potentially effective mode of engagement, but they are also costly and are currently prohibited within the boundaries of the WHS (HWMP 2008: 69). Another way of engaging the public is to employ Information Technology (generally, see Jansson 2007). There is a growing number of popular pursuits which involve people narrating and sharing their experience of places and landscapes via digital media uploaded to websites. One of the most popular is geocaching which:

...is a high-tech treasure hunting game played throughout the world by adventure seekers equipped with GPS devices. The basic idea is to locate hidden containers, called geocaches, outdoors and then share your experiences online. Geocaching is enjoyed by people from all age groups, with a strong sense of community and support for the environment. (geocaching.com)

Players hide caches of small, low value items and provide GPS coordinates and a description of the wider landscape. The latter may highlight particular points of interest such as archaeological sites or stories associated with the place. Other players download the coordinates to their GPS units and attempt to locate the caches, swapping items from one geocache to another. They then document their success (or failure) on the website with photographs and discussion. Geocaching is a prime example of the nexus between representation and embodied experience; it involves both exploring landscapes and representing them. It is inclusive – anyone can join – but also exclusive – players must not disclose geocache locations to the uninitiated (so-called ‘muggles’, in reference to Rowling 1997). As a community, it is competitive – it values the number of geocaches found – but it also stresses the quality of places to which geocachers are guided. It therefore illuminates a broader set of social relations: the creation of bottom-up self-sustaining communities which are both inclusive and exclusive, real and virtual (surprisingly, geocaching has attracted little academic interest, though see Gray 2008).

There are *circa* one million caches worldwide, with over c.55,000 in the UK (11/2/10), including a significant number near Hadrian's Wall. Most of the latter have been hidden within the last four years and have been located and commented upon by thousands of players. The striking linear distribution of geocaches in this area, especially along the central stretch of the Wall, reflects the fact that most of these geocaches give particular emphasis to the Roman monument and its legacy. However, if Hadrian's Wall is the prime focus for these geocaches, online discussion between players also ranges around wider aspects of landscape, weather and natural history. The website as a whole therefore provides a rich and dynamic resource for understanding experiences of this archaeological landscape.¹⁸ As well as geocaching, there are a number of other web-based past-times which allow users to share digital media such as GPS tracks and photographs (e.g. everytrail.com, maps.google.com).

Many heritage IT applications have focussed on virtual reconstructions. Just as with physical reconstructions, attention is often directed towards ever more detail in order to generate a more authentic visual experience. In contrast, Malpas (2008: 206) argues that New Media should focus on creating "modes of interaction that enrich and illuminate our understanding and experience of the original places". In this context, Affleck & Kvan (2008: 278) discuss their attempts to generate virtual communities to encourage public engagement with and reflection on heritage sites. In this case, the researchers found it difficult to stimulate involvement and they concluded that officially sponsored websites were more likely to be able to generate activity than community group websites. The argument made here is the opposite. Heritage managers need to learn lessons from the success of existing reflexive and self-sustaining activities such as geocaching.¹⁹

The IT applications discussed so far involve using digital cameras and GPS to document and share information about visits. However, these practices do not involve any interactivity whilst out and about in the landscape. The development of Location-based Technologies (LBT) is rapidly changing this situation. GPS-enabled mobile devices can deliver place-sensitive information. For example, Memory-Map (2005) already markets a Hadrian's Wall Trail application for Personal Digital Assistants (PDAs) which provides a commentary tailored to the user's location. Some guardianship sites on the Wall are looking to provide visitors with similar technology. However, the widening ownership of PDAs and the development of freely-available Augmented Reality software means such technology and the information it can communicate will not remain exclusively in the hands of heritage professionals, leading to a proliferation of geotagged user-generated content which visitors will be able to access whilst on the Wall. As well as text, this might include photographs or paintings which would allow visitors to stand where the photographer or artist stood and to contemplate the way in which both monument and landscape have been represented. The juxtaposition of image and reality is a powerful visual means of deconstructing the notions of authenticity and timelessness on which Hadrian's Wall trades. Visitors could witness the urbanization of formerly rural stretches (e.g. at Denton Burn, see Witcher 2010: figs 6 & 7) and the increasingly monumental form of the stone curtain wall in the central sector as a result of excavation and consolidation. It would become readily apparent that the remains visible today are not the end-result of a period of uninterrupted decay since the close of the Roman period, as popularly-imagined, but rather are the culmination of 150 years of rebuilding. The juxtaposition of multiple images whilst within the landscape could also encourage visitors to dwell on the blurred distinction of documentary and artistic photography in the Hadrian's Wall genre. For example, the ways in which seasonality, light and framing evoke particular impressions of the monument and its landscape (see Witcher 2010). Such revelations are not intended to strip the monument of its authenticity but rather to enrich its biography.

A particularly exciting possibility of such mobile technology is the opportunity to repopulate the monument with artefacts. By necessity, most heritage sites are stripped of their portable material culture which is then displayed in a museum, often far from the site of discovery. To some extent, museums have attempted to bring the monument into their displays; for example, the life-size reconstruction at Tullie House Museum impresses the physical scale of the stone curtain wall. However, the monument itself remains devoid of the mass of material culture which humanizes any historical site, but particularly characterizes Roman forts. As visitors move around sites, buildings and even specific rooms, GPS-enabled mobile devices could supply images and details of the artefacts previously discovered. Such objects would add richness to the archaeological structures and stimulate curiosity. For example, the presence of children's shoes might raise questions about family relationships on the military frontier; the presence of jewellery in a barrack block might excite enquiries about whether women were present within the fort or whether jewellery was in fact worn by both men and women; the gravestone of a young child might encourage contemplation of the demographical and emotional effects of high infant mortality in pre-modern societies. Behind each of these examples there is much academic debate (on issues of family, gender and quality of life, see Allason-Jones 2004; Allison 2006; Roberts & Cox 2004). There are no simple answers to be communicated to the public; and this is precisely the point. Given the evidence, the public can also begin to engage. These are not questions of purely academic import, but have wider resonance in understanding what it is to be human and, particularly, what it is to claim empathy/sympathy with the Roman past.

Individually, none of the techniques outlined here will enable every visitors to find more diverse meanings in the Wall. The technology is not universally available and is unevenly socially distributed. Yet, uptake is growing and it is most popular amongst a group which is traditionally under-represented in surveys of Wall visitors (i.e. young adults, ERA 2004: Appendix 2; Kinghorn & Willis 2008). However, it does begin a new process of engagement which builds upon existing bottom-up embodied and representational practices. The challenge for professional archaeologists and heritage managers is not to regulate user-generated content to ensure that it is accurate but rather to provide its own high-quality and accessible information which can inform public understanding and enable more diverse responses to the Wall than the current hegemonic discourse allows. Such techniques would incur only a fraction of the cost of establishing and maintaining the National Trail and would necessitate neither intrusive physical infrastructure nor constant staffing. It would also have other advantages. For example, currently there is contrast between the highly-managed guardianship sites and the stretches of Wall in between. The former are created as places of education (e.g. events, interpretation panels, etc.), whilst the latter are left to evoke more emotional responses. Augmented Reality could diminish this difference, whilst simultaneously preserving the unspoiled character of the landscape which many existing visitors value.

Conclusions

The inscription of Hadrian's Wall as a WHS signals its Outstanding Universal Value. However, the Wall clearly means different things to different people – regionally, nationally and internationally. For many people, especially in the West, frontiers are rarely encountered even though people travel more. Those frontiers which are encountered are an inconvenience rather than a barrier. Visiting an ancient frontier is therefore an ambiguous experience (on border tourism, see Timothy 2001; on walls as heritage, see Saunders 2009). It is immediately comprehensible but simultaneously alien; a site of interest rather than immediate personal resonance.

Each visitor brings their own biography to their embodied encounters. However, these ideas and experiences are culturally-situated and relate to wider constellations of imagery and identity. The research presented in this paper and in Witcher (2010) raises issues about how the public discourse of Hadrian's Wall is created and maintained with specific reference to the role of the New Media and the increasingly blurred nexus between representation and encounter. To some extent, technology has fossilized understanding of Hadrian's Wall and made it harder to diversify its meaning. In particular, Western societal familiarity with the ancestral Romans blinkers responses to this monument and its landscape. Sympathy ('being' Roman) robs visitors and archaeologists alike of the ability to ask questions because there is no difference to explain; embodied empathy is a more productive locus for historical enquiry because it provides a middle-ground between objectivity and subjectivity. Sensory experiences are shared, but questions must be asked in order to understand them.

This paper has discussed ways of disrupting visitor preconceptions, such as making reconstructions less perfect and more problematical. Most importantly, it has pointed to a number of existing bottom-up virtual communities engaged in documenting and discussing their experience of this archaeological landscape. Arguably geocachers and others are already practising a kind of landscape archaeology – observing spatial relationships, using embodied encounters and emotional empathy to ask questions, and creating their own visual representations to convey meanings. The aim is not to argue that the New Media should replace re-enactment or excavation but rather simply to recognize that such digital modes of engagement are already in existence, are of growing influence, and most importantly have been generated by the public. Rather than despair at the 'tales of the common people' (Camden 1607), archaeologists and heritage managers can learn from these undirected and self-sustaining practices to develop new and complementary modes of engagement.

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GoogleMaps. <http://maps.google.co.uk>

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List of illustrations

Figure 1. Sycamore Gap viewed from the south. The stone curtain wall runs along the skyline from left (west) to right (east). (Photo: author)

Figure 2. Sycamore Gap viewed from the National Trail along the stone curtain wall, looking east. (Photo: author)

Figure 3. Pilgrims on the Thirteenth Decennial Hadrian's Wall Pilgrimage at Steel Rigg. (Photo: author)

Figure 4. Latrine at Housesteads fort with interpretation panel. (Photo: author)

Figure 5. Reconstruction of latrine at Housesteads fort by Ronald Embleton (from Graham 1988: 18).

Figure 6. Reconstructed bath-house at Wallsend, with remains of barrack blocks in foreground. The structure is positioned immediately outside the (invisible) boundary of the World Heritage Site. (Photo: author)

Figure 7. Modern inscription commemorating the reconstruction of a section of stone curtain wall at Wallsend.

¹ In this paper, 'Hadrian's Wall' is used to refer to the Roman frontier complex as a whole. The famous stone wall which forms just one component of this complex is distinguished here as the 'stone curtain wall'.

² Hadrian's Wall Heritage Limited is a not-for-profit company, part-funded by the One NE and North West Regional Development Agencies, to co-ordinate the activities of the many institutions involved in the management of the World Heritage Site. It also manages initiatives intended to develop the local economy, for example, through the promotion of tourism.

³ It is not only the public who are influenced by the circulation of these ideas and images. For Wall scholars, one of the most significant discoveries of recent years has been the information which is still to be gained from examining the extant earthworks of the Hadrian's Wall system (e.g. milecastle crossings in the wall ditch, Welfare 2004). So familiar has the monument and landscape become that even archaeologists can fail to comprehend some of the evidence before their eyes. Just as visitors are preconditioned to see certain things, so too are archaeologists (see Bradley 2003 for a similar example at a prehistoric site).

⁴ It should be noted that Bruce's original 1863 edition was subtitled "A Guide to Pilgrims Journeying along the Barrier" and was aimed directly at the educated lay person. However, over successive editions, the *Handbook* has become a more scholarly tome. It has dispensed with directions for visitors and commentary on other features of touristic interest in order to focus on the (Roman) archaeological evidence. As such it has become a more specialist volume. The unusual evolution of the *Handbook* from popular to scholarly work, whilst attempting to retain some of its original spirit, may account for its hybrid character against which Rust reacts.

⁵ In understanding the planning and function of Hadrian's Wall, it has been noted that views from the stone curtain wall are often as extensive to the south as they are to the north (Poulter 2009: 74). Today, the iconic views of Hadrian's Wall zigzagging over multiple horizons (see Witcher 2010) obviously incorporate both 'civilized' territory to the south as well as 'Barbarian' lands to the north. However, it is the ability to take such visual command of the landscape from the privileged position of the Wall which makes this a specifically Roman gaze.

⁶ Visitors to heritage sites often intentionally take the highest ground to gain the best views of a monument. Visitors to Hadrian's Wall may therefore not necessarily be actively seeking to 'be' Roman (Sam Smiles, pers. comm.). However, the argument here is not about intention but effect.

⁷ E.g. participant responses to an image of the Wall under snow: "Makes me feel sympathy for soldiers from warmer climates" and "Bleak and dramatic and conjures up condition legionaries had to contend with". See <http://www.dur.ac.uk/roman.centre/hadrianswall/phototext/photo11/>

⁸ It should be stressed that de-familiarizing the Romans does not simply mean evolving empathy with the Barbarian 'Other' living north of the Wall. The recent promotion of a walking route to the north of Hadrian's Wall as a "Barbarian View" (2009) provides a welcome alternative perspective, but ultimately underscores the dominance of the romano-centric norm. A key aspect of academic studies of the past 20 years has been to break down the Roman versus Barbarian dichotomy in order to consider the complexity of social identities which cross-cut these colonial categories: gender, class, ethnicity and wealth. Another traditional pair of interpretive categories which archaeologists have sought to diminish is military and civilian (see James 2002).

⁹ The early applications of phenomenology in archaeology concerned prehistoric monuments (e.g. Tilley 1994) and most subsequent research has continued to focus on prehistory. There are few explicit applications to historical periods (but see Witcher 1998); Giles (2007: 109) argues that the "sheer wealth of contextual evidence available... actually constrains historical archaeologists from adopting the more creative and imaginative approaches".

¹⁰ More broadly, the New Media may also lead to the convergence, rather than diversification, of ideas as a result of the new opportunities for the marketing.

¹¹ See participant responses to the question “Why did the Romans build Hadrian’s Wall?” at <http://www.dur.ac.uk/roman.centre/hadrianswall/phototext/whydid/>

¹² Though often quoted, it should be noted that Breeze (2003: 12) was unable to verify that Wheeler did indeed make this statement. The broader sentiment, however, is undoubtedly an accurate reflection of the perception of Hadrian’s Wall studies within parts of the academic community.

¹³ In part, this response may demonstrate a classic flaw in survey method, i.e. existing visitors are likely to be a self-selecting sample that have already chosen the destination because it fulfils their needs and desires. A survey of existing visitors will fail to capture those who have chosen not to visit because of a (perceived) lack of provision.

¹⁴ The notable exception is the long-running annual programme of excavation conducted at Vindolanda Roman fort, just south of the Wall (Birley 2009).

¹⁵ The geographical origin of the auxiliary soldiers who garrisoned Hadrian’s Wall is much discussed. The names of individual units indicate that most were originally raised in Gaul, Germany and Spain with some from other parts of the Empire. It is generally assumed that these units quickly shifted to local recruiting (e.g. Breeze & Dobson 2000: 181) but this far from certain (see Hodgson 2009: 33-4). Nonetheless, it is clear that comparatively few soldiers of specifically Italian origin were present and that the majority came from the North-western provinces.

¹⁶ Debated aspects include the height of the curtain wall and the presence/absence of a crenellated parapet and wall-walk (see Bidwell 2008; Hodgson 2009: 42-6). Reconstructions at Vindolanda juxtapose stone and turf sections of the curtain wall and underscore the very different appearance of the eastern and western parts of the original Hadrianic system, but these are not competing interpretations *per se*. Some small patches of rendering of the rear face of the reconstructed curtain wall at Wallsend bear witness to a debate about the exterior finishing of the stone wall, e.g. was it whitewashed and painted to imitate ashlar masonry (Breeze 2006: 55-6)? A sign draws visitors’ attention to these interesting possibilities, but they are far from prominent and the larger structure itself provides no alternative versions of debated features.

¹⁷ A reconstruction of this earthwork would also be a useful piece of experimental archaeology in terms of understanding the speed and complexity of construction and the subsequent erosion of the ditch and banks over time. For example, the reconstructed turf curtain wall at Vindolanda has settled and sagged since its construction and provides useful evidence for archaeologists studying the remains of the original structure (Birley 2009: 37).

¹⁸ Geocachers stress responsibility towards the environment and caches must be hidden “in plain sight and never buried” (geocaching.com). Many of the caches located close to the Wall make reference to the monument’s own country code *Every Footstep Counts* (see Burton 2007: 14). Nonetheless, heritage managers will inevitably be concerned about the possibility of damage to the monument. In response to similar concerns in other protected natural and cultural landscapes, virtual ‘earthcaches’ have been encouraged with the aim of guiding visitors to places with an explicitly educational objective (e.g. earthcache.org). This virtual cache phenomenon has subsequently widened in popularity via websites such as waymarking.com.

¹⁹ The Hadrian’s Wall Management Plan (HWMP 2008: 68) provides only the briefest mention of the role of new technologies for public interpretation of the Wall over the next seven year management cycle to 2014.